

~~Box II, 97. E.~~

~~Dec 8: 1360~~

97. E Box. 0032

MR. REDGRAVE'S VISIT TO ITALY.

1860.



REPORT on various matters connected with my visit to Italy during the months of October, November, and December, 1860.

Florence, October 28.

Called on Mr. Trollope, and examined the Terra Cotta relief said to be by Orgagna, of which a photograph has been sent to the Department with a view to purchase. It is in good condition, a work of the period named, and a desirable purchase, and as such works are getting very rare in Italy it might be worth an offer.

Went to see an altar in a desecrated chapel near the Pitti Palace. It is a circular-headed altar under a recessed arch, the period late in the 15th century (quattro cento). The style very different from that purchased last year from Fiesole, perhaps the whole less enriched and not quite equal in workmanship. The fittings of the whole chapel, which are of the same material as the Lavello purchased last year, and the style of the school of Brunelleschi, may be had with the altar, perhaps without increase of price.

Reported to the Board through Mr. Cole, 30th October 1860.

October 30.

Went to Via Larga, No. 6071, to the studio of a sculptor (late S. P. Frecca) to see a Della Robbia altar-piece. It is coarse and late but complete, with side columns and lunette. Subject, the Birth of our Saviour with the heavenly host singing in the air. It seems to me to be the same as the altar-piece by Rossellino in the church of Monte Oliveto at Naples, afterwards reported on. Price asked 150*l.* It is coarse and not sharp in execution, but probably worth 100*l.*

Visited many of the churches in order to see what works it would be desirable to cast for our collections. The question of reproductions becomes serious indeed when considered in relation to space for exhibition, to expense, to the general indifference of the public to works in plaster, and the immense number of fine and desirable works that are to be found in Italy. The selection of type pieces, therefore, and

these the works of men of the first eminence, is of the greatest importance, and I was led to pause before commencing any action in this direction until more sufficient data were obtained.

As regards the sculpture of Italy of the 15th and 16th centuries it is so beautiful and seems to be so important, as well in the history of art as in forming a pure taste in art, that it certainly would be desirable to repeat a few of the finest pieces. There are various ways in which the question of reproduction may be viewed, but I would suggest the following mode of action.

To seek the most characteristic treatment of various subjects, and to endeavour so to select them that in illustrating subjects the works of various sculptors are chosen, and thus the great artists would be illustrated as well as the great works. Thus for instance I would take altars, tombs, madonnas, pulpits, and other church decorations; public monuments, fountains, statues, busts, etc., and endeavour to select them, first for variety of design, and secondly, as being the works of distinguished sculptors who ought to be represented in our collection, such as Mino da Fiesole, Rossellino, Luca della Robbia, Donatello, Pollajuolo, Maiano, Merliano, Giovanni da Nola, Ciccione, etc., etc., etc. Thus if an altar-tomb was chosen by Rossellino it would be well that a sarcophagus-tomb, if cast, should be the work of some other sculptor, as for instance Donatello or Merliano.

Nor would it be necessary in all cases to cast the whole of a monument or work; in some instances the most characteristic portion might be cast, and a drawing of the whole done to illustrate it. This indeed would be absolutely necessary in respect to many of the largest works of this nature, such as the great tomb of King Ladislaus (a noble work) in the church of St. Giovanni a Carbonara at Naples, or that of Cardinal Brancacci in St. Angelo a Nilo, by Donatello.

But above all things care should be taken to select the finest *type* works, and delay is less objectionable, or rather a less evil, than the hasty accumulation (always at large cost) of inadequate specimens.

Following out this view I have examined a few of the most remarkable works, and named in an appended list such of them as it would be desirable to endeavour to obtain; and I have even left a commission with the "formatore" of the Museo Borbonico at Naples to endeavour to obtain permission to cast for the Department, at a sum agreed upon, the bas-relief of an altar piece in the church of Monte Oliveto at Naples by Rossellino; and three figures in the round and a bas relief, being part of an altar-tomb in Saint Angelo a Nilo, by Donatello.

This will be a beginning of the action I recommend, and successive visits to Italy may enable us to carry out the plan fully.

Following out the plan suggested as to the reproduction of works in sculpture, I would propose that a few type-works in decorative fresco should be selected for reproduction. Thus I would say the frescos of Benozzo Gozzoli in the Riccardi Chapel at Florence might be wholly copied, not only as illustrating the works of that great artist, but also as a specimen of how a private chapel of a noble family of the 15th century was decorated and enriched. I would also propose that the stall-carvings and intarsias of the chapel (a very small one) should be copied, and the whole set up as an entire work. The large Beato Angelico picture of the Virgin and Child in the Uffizi collection was formerly on the altar of this chapel and should be reproduced for its completion as a whole. Mr. Spence offered to have the *frescos* copied in oil (dry) by a first rate copyist at Florence, himself to superintend the work.

For the same reasons I would propose to copy the Cambio or exchange at Perugia, as a specimen of the rich decoration of the exchange of a small Italian city of the 16th century. The building is about 20 ft. x 36 ft., and consists of two groined arches covered with fresco decorations by Perugino, and it has a wonderfully fine bench and desk in carved wood, unrivalled among the fine works of Italy, —this also might be copied in gutta percha, and the intarsias copied in oil and applied.

5th November 1860.

Visited Assisi and Spello: at the latter place there is a fine Baldachino over the altar dated 1515.—A column might be cast. The Arundel Society's reproduction of the fresco of Pinturicchio, in a chapel of this church, falls very short of giving a full impression of its excellence.

Rome, 9th November 1860.

EXAMINED the large Della Robbia altar-piece in company with Mr. Macpherson. It is a made up work, the principal piece coarse, the lunette good but of a different style and period from the centre relief. Considering, however, its size and importance, and the increasing rarity of such pieces, it would be well to obtain it. Empowered Mr. Macpherson to treat with the owner at a sum which is to include all charges whatever and its delivery to Mr. Macbean with the requisite legal permission for it to quit the country.

November 11th.

Visited the Gigli portion of the Campana collection: part of the collection stowed away, but from what I saw I should conclude 5000*l.* the value of it, and I think if we had now the power to treat it might be got for this sum. There are 4 or 5 very rare and fine pieces, viz., the statue by M. Angelo, the frieze by Donatello, the terra cotta by Ghiberti, and another,—the Roundels by Della Robbia in the Campana collection would be a desirable addition.—Reported accordingly by letter.

November 13th.

Examined the Marbles in the Vatican and noted several that would, if cast, add very much to our ornamental collection. But the whole consideration of the Architectural Museum wants to be determined beforehand.

Examined the proportions of the Braccio Nuovo, the principal sculpture gallery, with regard to its fitness for exhibiting sculpture. The dimensions are merely estimated, and as I was stopped from even taking notes I am rather at a disadvantage. The Gallery has a succession of semicircular niches in which the statues stand, and between each niche a bust on a term. The light in the roof occupies $\frac{3}{13}$ of the semicircle and $\frac{15}{29}$ (rather more than half) lengthways. The side walls are about 20 feet high to the springing of the arch, the width about 28 feet. The day was cloudy but this gave (in Italy) quite sufficient light. A slight sketch is appended, Figs. 1 and 2.

The statues and busts stood on bases about 3 feet high: there was another row of busts above, on brackets. On the whole this is one of the best sculpture galleries I have seen, but the grey dove marble and grey granite in the niches, together with the white ceiling, gives the whole a frigid look; it is costly, yet wants richness, a little colour, and gold would improve it.

The stands for holding tazzi and vases in the Etruscan Museum of the Vatican are well contrived for displaying these works in every possible view. See Figs. 3 & 4; (a) is a fixed square base with a pin in the centre on which the square block (b) revolves; (c) also a square block is hinged with a butt-hinge at (d) which allows the vase to be thrown back so as to see the inside of the bowl, or the under surface: the object itself being fastened by a band at (e) and revolving on the pin in (f). By these means all motions are simply obtained, a spring catch at (g) fastens the vase when upright. The whole base is about 9 inches high, and is either weighted or screwed to the shelf.

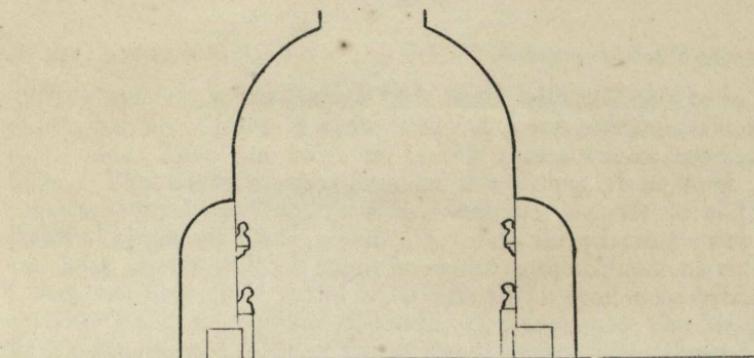


FIG. 1

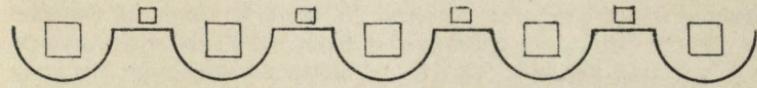
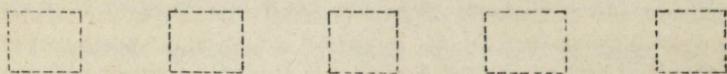
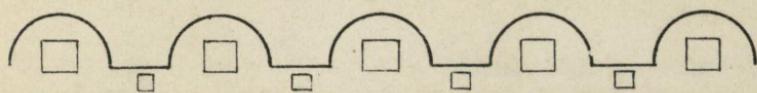


FIG. 2

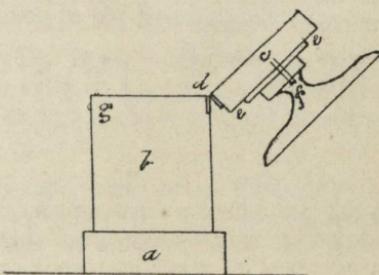
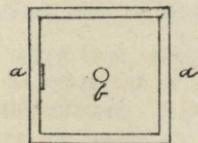


FIG. 3 & 4

Library of the Vatican.

It is difficult, in the hurried visit made with a Custode, to see thoroughly the objects in a museum, and I was prevented a second visit. Mr. Robinson, however, on his return was to report more fully. The Christian antiquities contain among them some fine consular dyptychs and other ivories, a singularly beautiful bit of Della Robbia (Virgin and Child) about 5 in. x 7 in., some Limoges enamels and book covers which it might be useful to photograph and colour. I was told that there would be no difficulty in obtaining permission applying for it to Cardinal Antonelli, or Monsignore San Margon, 85 Via Babuino. One or two of the illustrated books shewed fine specimens of ornament. Macpherson could photograph, but I think it desirable that the permanency of those already done from the Louvre, etc., should be examined into before this action is carried on.

Naples, 26th November 1860.

EXAMINED carefully the whole of the Museo Nationale (late Borbonico) with a view to reproductions, bearing in mind my former notes on Florence and Rome, and also Mr. Cole's notes in Murray.

The whole question is a difficult one, where to begin and where to end, also our relations to classical art of the Greek and Roman period. All the best *forms* have been engraved, and thus far are available. As to vases the British Museum is as strong as the Borbonico: as to art bronzes (I believe) stronger; as to utensils in bronze, these have little relation to present wants, and to enter upon casts and reproductions would be useless. I would propose, *if anything is done*, to have a series of the most elegant *handles, feet, etc.* cast, with, perhaps, one or two whole objects where particularly fine. I have made a list of the following in the Bronze collection:—

Nos. 519, 1583, 1456 or 89, 1563, 1934, 1583, 1751 or 354, 1351, 1376, 1381, 1387, 1386, 1385 or 34, 1356, 5288, 5291, 5284, 5310, 5314, 5315, 1524 or 136, 1521—of these numbers handles only to be cast.

Nos. 1833 vase, 1837 vase, 1805 vase, 1405 or 44 tripod, 1451, or 85 charcoal or ash basket, 1382 bucket, 1357 bucket—the entire subject. 1477 top and legs of a tripod, 1418 top only, 5475 leg only.

Prices of handles would vary from 1 to 3 ducats, whole subjects in proportion. There would be no difficulty in having the work done through the Formatore of the Museum, notwithstanding, I should *not* at present advise entering upon these reproductions.

In the room of the precious metals the following reproductions are far more desirable :—The great sardonyx cup (No. 1782) should be cast, back and front, also photographed and coloured. The silver bowls, Nos. 222, 262, 258, 264, 382, 383, should be cast; and in the Renaissance room the bust attributed to M. Angelo (No. 1), and relieveo spandrel piece (No. 6 or 26) might be cast. But above all others the fine casket made for Alessandro de Medici (No. 1285) should be copied in electro; it is unique in its kind, goldsmiths' work and figures in round boss with inserted plaques of rock crystal; such a work will never leave the museum, and an exact copy should be secured, but it would necessitate sending a good workman over, and a special permission beforehand being obtained; it is about 2 ft. x 1 ft. 3 in., 1 ft. 3 in. high. An early ivory plaque (No. 1190 or 1085) might also be cast; and the well known antique camaeo amphora and the tazza photographed and coloured.

Of the Mosaics it is difficult to speak, as I believe, after much consideration, that it would be useless to copy them by photography or in any way but by the same material.

The paintings from Pompeii have been so fully illustrated by Zahn and others, that little use would be obtained by photographs, or indeed from copies of any kind, which must be tame and spiritless, while the wonderful impression made by these works arises out of their extreme felicity and facility of execution; a dash and spirit inconceivable except from inspection; and which shews the high state of art-culture when such *mere* decorators' work as this could be inspired with so much art-feeling and have been dashed off by such facile, if such rude, labourers.

It only remains for me to name some of the monuments in churches at Naples which I consider might be worthy of reproduction by casts or drawings, or both.

Cast.—Bas-relief of altar-piece by Rossellino, in the church of Monte Oliveto—drawing of the whole altar. Ordered.

Cast.—Part of the altar in the corresponding chapel on the right in entering in the same church; the figure of the saint on the right; also three pieces of the predella, viz., the Adoration, Ascension, and Entombment,—date 1490, by Benedetto de Maiano.

Cast.—Sta. Maria della Néve by Giovanni da Nola, in the church of St. Domenico Maggiore.

Cast.—Tomb of Child at the top of stairs leading into cloisters of S. S. Severino e Sossio. Cast the sarcophagus and photograph the whole tomb, for which there is sufficient light.

Boy 7^c

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Cast.—In the cathedral, a bas relief under the principal altar, by Giovanni da Nola.

Cast.—In the church of St. Angelo a Nilo, the three supporting figures and the bas relief on sarcophagus of the altar tomb by Donatello, and make a drawing of the whole tomb.

Also it might be as well to cast the veiled Christ in the church of Sta. Maria della Pieta de Sangri, by Giuseppe Sammartino, as a specimen of 18th century art, passably good of its kind, and from which probably has originated many of those veiled figures which now excite an ignorant wonder.

I could insert many other works of which I have taken notes, but think those named would be sufficient for Naples. Many at Rome and Florence could be proposed for the illustration of other great names.

RICHARD REDGRAVE.

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RICHARD RIDGEVALE.